

Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network

Our mission is to connect and support people and communities who are striving to live more safely with wildfire. The FAC Net is a catalyst for spreading best practices and innovations in fire adaptation nationwide.



The Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network (FAC Net) is changing the way we live with wildfire in the U.S. We invest in the capacity of diverse communities to take action and improve their resilience. We connect practitioners to transfer ideas and build relationships for peer support. Together, we identify solutions to complex wildfire issues, and we support their implementation.

FAC Net's sphere of influence goes beyond our core network membership, reaching hundreds of additional communities through our affiliate member program, and working with dozens of partners at national and regional scales. April 2018 marks the network's fifth year of operations. In that time we've deeply affected the fire adaptation work of our core membership, and our momentum and reach continue to grow.

In recent months, FAC Net staff and members have invested in the health and capacity of several state network initiatives, added depth and value to our affiliate membership program, placed new emphasis on equity and inclusion, contributed to national conversations about fire, and increased wildfire resilience in the places we work.

Strategic Engagements Amplify Network Impact

In addition to stewarding FAC Net, staff provide technical assistance, facilitation, design, coaching and knowledge-building services that help us reach beyond our core and affiliate memberships—influencing and enrolling hundreds of additional partners and practitioners in our vision for fire adaptation. This fall, for example, we provided planning guidance for 120 Utah Department of Natural Resources staff, helped host a post-fire workshop for people impacted by the wine country fires in northern California, and met with state Firewise coordinators at their annual meeting in Boise. We also began working with teams in Arizona, Montana and New Mexico that are pursuing statewide network strategies to support fire adaptation.

Affiliate Membership—Growing, Connecting, Adding Value

Since launching the affiliate member program we've seen consistent growth and engagement, and well over 100 members now participate via the geospatial website and workspace. Over the past few months we have



been deepening our connections with these members. We hold webinars for affiliates and offer peer assists and staff coaching—such as conversations about mitigation fundraising strategies; coordinating job description and work plan sharing to help new WUI Coordinators craft their own priorities; reviewing CWPP revisions and providing advice and examples; and connecting practitioners that work with RC&Ds to help navigate opportunities within those organizational structures.

The www.fireadaptednetwork.org site also connects people through the member profile system—facilitating connections between 50 people in the last few months alone. One such connection was between FAC Net core members from the Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership (GFFP) and a person at the Yarnell Fire District. The person from Yarnell found GFFP through the FAC Net website, and after learning more about their work through the profile, reached out for assistance.

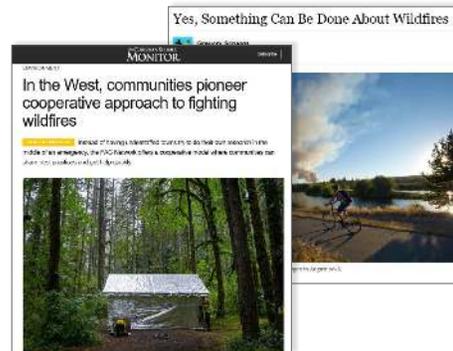
“It is difficult to convey the gigantic strides we have made in the state in just a few years with some financial and technical assistance from FAC Net and some dedicated professionals here to implement ideas. We have a statewide nonprofit, a network of Ambassadors and local Fire Safety Councils, Firewise Communities that support risk reduction efforts, and partnerships with statewide environmental nonprofits to increase wildfire resiliency. We have dozens of Ready, Set, Go! fire companies. NONE of this was present prior to our engagement with FAC Net.”

Elevating Equity and Inclusion in Community Engagement

FAC Net began working with The Nature Conservancy’s Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (GDEI) initiative two years ago. Through that, we have been learning ways to incorporate cultural fluency into our values and programming. Fire adapted communities work is about reducing wildfire risk, but it is equally about increasing community resilience and connectivity. That means investing in all community members’ capacity to plan for and weather natural disasters like wildfires. Too often, fire adaptation success is limited to those with the most privilege and resources. To make a real difference we must develop strategies that engage all members of our communities. As the network continues to grow, an equity and inclusion lens will guide our work.

Influencing the National Fire Conversation

FAC Net makes a difference in national, regional and local conversations about wildland fire issues. 2017 was a record year for wildfires across the U.S., with eyes and ears pointed toward California in the fall and winter. Media activity was extremely high. FAC Net staff and



members were contacted by a number of reporters, and they took advantage of the opportunity to offer examples of a better way forward. The work of FAC Net and our members was featured in more than 15 magazines, newspapers and radio stations, including the *Christian Science Monitor*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Yes!* and *Fortune*.



In December, FAC Net members from municipal fire services met for a learning exchange about FAC Coordinator roles. © WRTC (Michelle Medley-Daniel)

Building Wildfire Resilience Together

Members Helping Members—Better Work, Bigger Impact

How do WUI Coordinators from three fire departments approach their jobs? Coordinators from Ashland Fire and Rescue (Oregon), Chelan Fire District 1 (Washington) and the Santa Fe Fire Department (New Mexico) held a learning exchange in December to compare their experiences, priorities and opportunities as FAC leaders. They discussed home assessment approaches and data strategies, materials produced in partnership with the Master Gardeners program, and fire department leadership’s expectations. As more fire departments fill WUI Coordinator positions—a trend we are seeing—supporting the people in those positions through peer-mentoring will be increasingly critical, through events like this, and also through virtual peer assistance that FAC Net is enabling.

Virtual learning opportunities like webinars provide a cost-efficient way to share information and begin dialogue. The Rapid City (South Dakota) Fire Department WUI Specialist has a unique skill set due to his experience in both fire and in construction. His construction background helps him to “understand

the nature and makeup of building materials, and to recognize new possibilities in using different materials.” This fall he used that experience to host a FAC Net webinar on fire resistant building materials. The webinar was well received and several people followed up with him to learn more. Members facing similar challenges and opportunities are learning about each other’s strategies and using them at home. Project Wildfire, in central Oregon, is building fire service and business sector relationships as part of their budding business resiliency program. So they have been taking notes from Ashland Fire, which has a good collaborative partnership with their local chamber of commerce. And the central Oregon resort community of Sunriver is in the process of designing a local emergency evacuation plan for property owners and tourists. After seeing Lake Tahoe’s program last spring at the FAC Net workshop, and seeing the similarities between Sunriver and Tahoe, Project Wildfire is making connections between these partners. But Project Wildfire isn’t just learning from the network, they’re spreading their FireFree debris collection program model to affiliate members—in California, Hawaii, Montana and Washington.



In a relatively inaccessible 90-acre common area surrounded by more than 200 individual parcels, the Rapid City Fire Department helped the homeowner association complete hand and mechanical treatments, piling the excess fuels in preparation for burning.
© Rapid City FD (Tim Weaver)

Reducing Risk on the Ground

While community wildfire resilience is about more than fuels reduction, it is the centerpiece of many fire adaptation efforts, and all FAC Net members run fuels management programs in their communities.

- The Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership received a grant to reduce fuel loads and fire risk on 270 acres in key areas in and around Flagstaff. They also completed work on 325 acres in Ft. Tuthill County Fairgrounds.
- Island Park completed 61 home assessments, and two slash pickup events yielding 2,300 cubic yards of slash from hundreds of people.
- The Forest Stewards Guild and their partners burned 160 acres in the WUI as part of the Rio Trampas TREX. An additional unit was thinned and prepped for pile and broadcast burning in the spring.
- The Klamath TREX burned 310 acres this fall, and FAC Net members secured another investment from the Reserved Treaty Rights Lands Program to support future TREX.
- Project Wildfire hosted a FireFree event that brought in over 14,000 cubic yards of material from residents, and Project Wildfire treated another 728 acres.

- FireWise of Southwest Colorado started a defensible space cost-share program, conducting over 160 site visits and 44 cost-share projects. They completed four large mitigation projects adjacent to, and in partnership with, the Forest Service. They also worked with the Pine River Irrigation District to dispose of 200 loads of slash—1,000 volunteer-hours of work—using the district's air curtain burner.
- In Rapid City, SD a 90-acre common area surrounded by private parcels has been the site of extensive work. The HOA that owns the property requested help from the Rapid City Fire Department, and with grant funding they completed treatments on nearly the entire parcel.



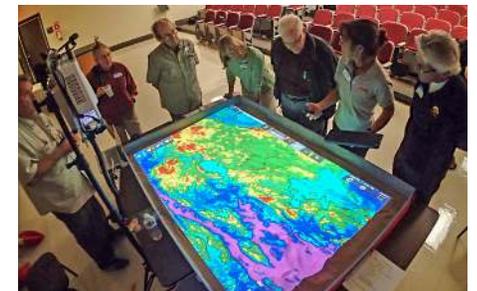
Learning Events Boost Capacity for Living with Fire

In Idaho, Island Park Sustainable Fire Community held workshops for people to share their fire fears, needs and wants and to make new connections. Following a walk-through of one subdivision with the county Emergency Response Coordinator and the Forest Service Fire Manager where discussion centered on evacuation plans and emergency preparedness, property owners immediately solidified plans to take action.

FAC Net members in Georgia focused on reaching a rural audience this fall, with "Firewise on the Farm" events helping them engage over a hundred people from rural communities. These events were the fruit of a broad partnership, held in cooperation with local fire departments, Soil & Water Conservation Districts, RC&D councils, mitigation contractors, extension services, 4-H, landowner associations, state and federal agencies and others.

In northern Minnesota, the July "Living with Fire" workshop in Ely was inspired by the work of other FAC Net members,

including the Citizen's Fire Academy in Oregon, Island Park's Incident Command reenactment and Santa Fe's Simtable workshop. Well attended by permanent and seasonal residents alike, meeting evaluations indicated the messages got through—responses included, "I need to work on my driveway to make it safe for local emergency personnel," "I need an evacuation plan," and "controlled fire is a good thing!" And the organizers reported that participants in the event now want more—more in-depth work-shops, more technical assistance with mitigation work, more field learning.



The director of the Wildfire Network—a member of FAC Net from New Mexico—hosted a Simtable wildfire modeling session during the "Living with Wildfire" event in Ely, Minnesota. These hands-on sessions that let people explore wildfire scenarios near their communities have been used by several FAC Net members to engage residents and spur action. © Timberjay Newspaper (Keith Vandervort)

Left: "Firewise on the Farm" took FAC concepts to rural communities in northern Georgia this fall.

© Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D

“The support and seed money we received from FAC Net as we started our collaborative played a huge role in what I consider to be one of our most significant accomplishments over the past one or two years, which is an enhanced relationship with the National Forest.”

Project Wildfire and the Bend Parks Department gave a presentation at the Oregon Parks and Recreation Association conference this fall. They spoke about a May 2017 controlled burn in Shevlin Park—a treasured and heavily used public space in Bend—sharing lessons on prescribed fire use and smoke mitigation techniques with administrators from across the state.



Shevlin Park Burn

© Project Wildfire

Aligning Plans, Policies and Authorities for All-Hands All-Lands Work

The work of FAC Net members includes the collaboration, planning and implementation to allow cross-boundary work that mitigates risk and increases wildfire resilience. In Arizona, the Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership is working with the Natural Resource Conservation Service on a Conservation Implementation Strategy. This strategy prioritizes treatments on private, state and

municipal lands and advances fire adaptation goals. In South Dakota, the Black Hills Resilient Forest Strategy and the Mountain Pine Beetle Strategy have been combined into a single strategy that will help agencies move forward with a Cohesive Strategy approach. The effort has been influenced by FAC Net members and the resources they’ve shared with Rapid City members.

Sometimes, policy change is required to address fire risk. In Boise, a new fuels reduction policy enables residents to treat grass on City-managed open space adjacent to their property, helping landowners manage the risks that come with living in the WUI.

In southwest Colorado, the San Juan National Forest is working with the Colorado State Forest Service on at least three Good Neighbor Authority projects that adjoin several FireWise of Southwest Colorado communities. Most of the communities that FireWise works with adjoin the Forest, so authorities that enable all-lands work are critical to their success. According to FireWise staff, “forest managers are starting to recognize the wildfire preparation efforts made by these communities. The result is the communities wanting to do more now that they see the Forest Service taking action.”

A Little More Capacity— A Lot More Impact

Successful fire adaptation efforts require coordination. Without someone bringing together various parts of the system, everything is a one-off project that cannot live up to its potential. FAC Net members are investing in the kind of local and regional capacity that stitches the components of a robust resilience strategy together.

In Texas, the Austin Fire Department has filled seven new full-time positions dedicated to implementation of the Cohesive Strategy, including a dedicated Fire Adapted Communities Coordinator. FAC Net members shared staffing models and position descriptions that assisted with these hires.

In New Mexico, The Forest Stewards Guild is increasing its capacity for prescribed fire and fire adaptation by adding two new staff positions and by working with the Gravitas Peak Wildland Fire Module. The Guild and the Module have aligned missions, and working together will increase capacity for prescribed fire and fuels reduction at a scale beyond which either can achieve alone.

The Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team is tackling treatment planning in tandem with workforce capacity issues. By

working on both, they’ll have shovel-ready projects and the regional capacity to implement them aligned.

“Support from FAC Net has helped raise the collaborative profile of our work and created a tipping point in our visibility and credibility in the community and amongst the local decision-makers that have wildfire responsibilities.”

<http://fireadaptednetwork.org/>
<https://www.facebook.com/FACNetwork>
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The Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network is supported by *Promoting Ecosystem Resilience and Fire Adapted Communities Together* (PERFACT), a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service and Department of the Interior, in partnership with the Watershed Research and Training Center. For more information about the FAC Net, contact Michelle Medley-Daniel at michelle@thewatershedcenter.com.

PERFACT is an equal opportunity provider.